

2017  
THE GLEANER  
2018







**Forward We Go**

*Katie DeAngelo*  
(Front Cover)



*The Gleaner* is a theme-based literary journal edited by the undergraduate students at Delaware Valley University.

We showcase all forms of written work as well as artwork and photography pieces.

This year's theme is *Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been?*



*Recalculating... ..*

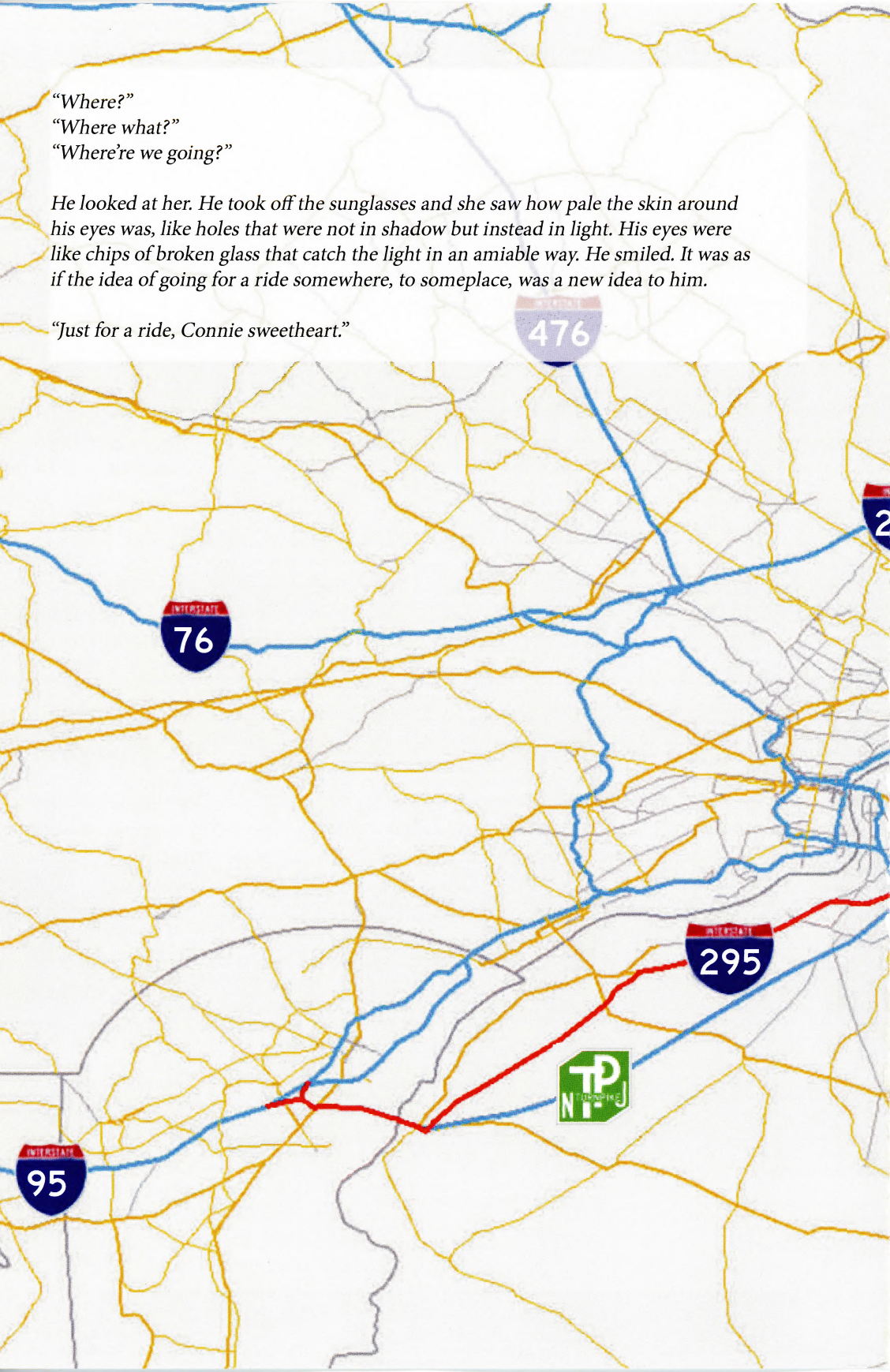
"Where?"

"Where what?"

"Where're we going?"

*He looked at her. He took off the sunglasses and she saw how pale the skin around his eyes was, like holes that were not in shadow but instead in light. His eyes were like chips of broken glass that catch the light in an amiable way. He smiled. It was as if the idea of going for a ride somewhere, to someplace, was a new idea to him.*

"Just for a ride, Connie sweetheart."







- "Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been?"

Joyce Carol Oates





Poetry



Colophon/Index



Play



Prose





**High School Writing Competition**

**63**

**68**

**Acknowledgements/Staff**

**Artwork/Photography**

**27**

# Underneath Our Soles

By Kiara Lynn Garcia

Metal bird wings wiggle  
Through the nebulas  
Turbulence on my mind  
Breezed over the pacific sea  
My eyes at ease  
The stale cold kissed  
My cheeks double  
South America's warm welcome  
For an exchange student  
From the United States

Los cerros de Chile  
Those Chilean hills  
Steep in attitude,  
Buses run angrily  
While stray dogs  
Protect the curves  
Where Pablo Neruda walked

In Valparaiso, colored homes  
Topped by gleam hues  
The nervous ocean roars  
The Atacama Desert struggles  
To speak in my presence  
Healing is still a process

Metal bird shook  
Over the Andes mountains'  
Sharp decline  
Our hearts fall too  
Like the others have  
Heading to Argentina  
The good air of the port  
Evaporated in October

A mother's fight  
To protect memory  
Circles La Casa Rosa  
Where is Maldonado,  
Where is my child,  
Where are my rights,  
Still continue

Metal bird wings sway  
To the North region of Arica



Smuggling a day in Peru  
Their sentiments differ  
For Pisco is Peruvian  
Not Chilean in soul,  
For the cession of land in  
The War of the Pacific  
Are told to tourists

Metal bird's last stop  
On the Island of Hispaniola  
Los ladrones stole again  
Dominican plantains  
Smashed into mangú  
On their plates

Water streams sporadically  
Light returns for the hour  
El Presidente is shared  
Among neighbors at night  
Celebrating my departure

Across the continent  
The ocean tilts forward  
Spanish tongues mingle  
Dialects of migrations  
Underneath their soles  
Our pathways will cross again.

## **Where Are You Going?** By Natalia Zecca-Naples

Where are you going?  
Daddy will be home in a little while.  
Time to clean up your toys, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
To get my brother  
Get your stick and cleats.  
Time for practice, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
To get my bag  
Toto is scratching at the door.  
Time to take her out, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
To get her leash  
Graduation practice is about to start.  
Time to get your gown on, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
To get my tassel  
It's raining cats and dogs out there.  
Time to leave for your interview.

Where are you going?  
To get my phone  
The ceremony starts in an hour.  
Time for the photographer, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
To get the rings  
If the water's broken, it won't be long.  
Time to get the car, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
To get my keys  
This child has more toys than he could ever play with.

Time to help blow out the candles, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
To get my camera  
I know there's going to be a lot of traffic on a Friday.  
Time to leave for my doctor's appointment.

Where are you going?  
To get your cane  
The pain is getting worse by the minute and my throat is dry.  
Time for my meds, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
To get some fresh water  
Really, dear, I'm ready to see your father.  
Time for me to say goodbye, Ronny.

Where are you going?  
Nowhere, Mom.

## **The Answer in Your Eyes** By Natalia Zecca-Naples

In your eyes I see the stars  
The fires that made them glow  
Now they stare upon me  
With a love that only we can know.

We met so long ago, it seems  
Eons before time  
Our hands were meant to touch  
All part of God's design.

Remember those fond years  
When we would laugh like fools  
We'd raise hell together  
Breaking all their rules.

Some part of you is in me  
Some part of me is in you



As I leave this world  
I know our love is true.

Somewhere out in space  
There is a home for us  
Out there in the emptiness  
We'll end as all things must.

But even after we meet death  
And join those particles in the sky  
To all of life's eternal questions  
You are my reply.

## **Awake** By Jordan Burbage

Guilt binds give and take  
between the hillsides of want and enough,  
drawing scar-ways and night-signs  
from tomorrow to peace.  
Noose just one word and watch  
darkness shout light beyond the stars.  
Snowfalls and keyhole brightness  
suffer the candle thrust into the fold  
of a mind too tired to wait-out  
Summer's locksmith damp.

Hear me when I say that more  
winds lie hushed beneath  
the warm mist of pages  
pinned between hand and shoulder.  
Taste the sky wake blue.  
Thunder the day's first step.

## **I am From** By Leslee Blahut

I am from a mottled past  
where the grit of Kensington and Hanoi  
met the saltiness of Pawtucket.  
Where decades of pride punched holes in family histories,  
and where pieces would be put back together,  
but never fit completely.  
I am from the soft rhythm of a rocking chair,  
and the whispers of my sisters.  
I am from a hard shell that sustained me,  
a side-eye that steered me,  
a fear of failure that fueled me.  
I am from a change of plans  
and a tall dose of happenstance.  
Twenty fingers and twenty toes that graced me,  
a January and July who taught me where I truly am from.

## Fresh Meat By Tiara Dwight

Freshman year was a trial run  
I'll do better next semester  
This is only mile one

I've grown a lot  
Learn, love and loss  
I learned how to love even though I've lost  
I hit rock bottom and turned back to the cross

I've been sinnin'  
Stained my white linen  
Ripped out my own wings and I'm fallin' fast

A splash of Amsterdam spilt down my chest  
Get close enough you'll see purple lips  
The result of marijuana changing my flesh

Hands that have touched  
Lips that have sucked  
Lustful moments I can't erase  
The worst part was I wasn't sorry  
Wallowing in Your safety net called grace

I took the L  
You tested me  
And I failed  
I was supposed to be your Job  
But now it's Lucifer's story being told

Yet somehow I've been made anew  
Reminded me that I'm to mirror You  
I'm ready now  
Sophomore year; round two  
Trial's over  
Time to pay my due



## To Be Continued... By Omayra Aguirre

There is cake so it must be my birthday,  
A painless time.  
Film cameras flashing, people smiling,  
Gifts piling  
Up,  
Up, and away!  
There goes my kite  
In the air, swaying in sight.  
But now  
I am in the field running around chasing cows instead.  
Juvenescence explains why I am so easily distracted,  
Curious,  
Naïve,  
Willing to explore.  
Good thing I am not a bad kid,  
However, that is just an opinion.

Flashing forward to opening the present;  
The gift is an obstacle.  
Stalled in the field  
Chasing cows is no longer productive  
Because I have to be responsible,  
Focused.  
Quick horror story:  
Establishing a new priority.  
Do this  
Take care of that  
Get it done.  
Often it feels as though the more I try, the less likely I am to succeed  
But quitting is not an option.

What was once a kite dancing in the sky  
Is now a deadline  
Only seconds away from landing.  
Decisions, decisions  
Must be made but there is a time limit.  
Multiple visions,  
Different goals,  
I do not want to prohibit  
Myself from creativity,  
Or become restricted to just one path.  
How do I settle for simplicity  
Without losing my authenticity?  
How can I help the world when I need assistance too?

There are so many things I want to do—  
Times up!  
The expectation to have it figured out on the spot  
Has caught up.  
How about a rain check?  
Even if I meet the deadline and shake its hand  
There is no guarantee as to what comes next.  
So what now?  
Maybe I'll go back to running around the field chasing my cows.  
Reminiscing on painless times.

## Hike of Life by Emma Conard

Depression is a difficult illness to explain, especially if you're like me and have been dealing with it for a long time. Because of its nature, depression is tricky, and even trickier to articulate. You can't see depression right off the bat, and you can't expect it to look the same every day or person to person. So try to imagine living with depression like this:

Living with depression is like going hiking with a pretty hefty backpack on. You might not even think it's heavy when you put it on and you might not notice it there. But when you start to feel the weight of it all, you think "ok, I can do this, so many people have done this before, so I can handle this challenge because I am strong." As your hike continues, you come across a hill. Maybe it's not so steep, and normally you could overcome it no problem, but man, with this backpack on, the top of the ridge looks miles away. Even when you reach the top you still feel awful because not only are you tired from the climb, but the weight on your back is still there pulling you back down. But you press on without a break because that's what people do on hikes, and it's expected of you. On your hike, you might come across fallen trees you have to crawl under, a river you must ford, or rocks and branches to climb. Sure, you used to be able to crawl under the tree - but now your backpack is stuck and you're sure as heck stuck with it. Crossing the river is fine - until your backpack gets soggy and now it's even heavier than before. Climbing is going well - until the backpack offsets your center of balance. Simple obstacles are now setting you back more and more, and you dread the more treacherous parts of the trail you know loom ahead.

"Just take off your backpack!" a helpful friend might suggest. "Just let it go and keep moving!" You notice they don't have a backpack and didn't have one to start out with. You wish you could shrug off your pack and leave it behind, but at this point you've been through so much it feels like a part of who you are. "Try an easier path, try something you enjoy doing!" another friend suggests. The easier path is nice, but the pressure on your shoulders is ever present, and even after a scenic route you are still exhausted from carrying it around with you. Other people don't ever notice your backpack, even when they become close friends on the journey.

Some days it's not so bad. The pack feels a little lighter and the path looks like something you can totally conquer today. You think to yourself, "I'm getting over it! I'm



strong enough for this, maybe it'll just keep getting easier. I can do it!" And you do. Until one morning your pack is heavier than ever, and instead of thinking of how strong you've been, your thoughts turn sour; "I was foolish to think it wouldn't be heavy. I should have seen it coming, after all, I still have the backpack in the first place. I might not be strong enough for this." You're never totally sure how heavy the pack is going to be, or for how long. But you keep hiking.

Sometimes you meet other people with a pack like yours. Some might not want to talk about them, others do. Sometimes you meet someone who will help carry your backpack with you, even if they have a pack of their own, and you are grateful. Some people suggests ways to make the backpack lighter, and sometimes that works for you, sometimes it doesn't. You try to help others with their packs, too. You keep moving forward.

Hiking with this weight is exhausting. You can take breaks here and there, but the backpack is still heavy and the path is still so long ahead. You can pick up your pack and keep going, over and under all the obstacles that await you. You can take it one step at a time, and try to enjoy the view as you go. Above all though, you have proven your strength so far, so why not see what might lay over the horizon? And who knows, maybe you won't have to carry your pack anymore one day. No matter how heavy the pack is on your back, all you can do is just keep moving forward.

That's what depression is like, every day, for thousands of people. If you or a loved one feels the weight of depression, don't be afraid to seek help and guidance. Depression may be a heavy burden, but you don't have to carry it alone.

## Used to Think by Veronica Nagorny

I used to think that there was nothing more that I could love than the rain on the roof above as I lay deep in my bed of blankets, but then I saw your eyes.

I sat there by the window, mug in my hand, blanket wrapped around my body, the cat snuggling into my lap as my eyes stayed glued to the storm outside. There was subtle thunder off in the distance and I subconsciously willed it to come closer and closer. The clouds furrowed their brows in response.

Should I pray to Poseidon, maybe? I thought. My cat snored in her sleep and I took that as a no. I looked down at her, her orange tail wrapping itself around my arm whilst she slept, then directed my gaze back to the window.

Why would I even pray to him? It's not like I want the storm to go away.

Thunder boomed.

And I don't think it's his job to keep it going.

I sipped my tea.

Or is it?

I really need to brush up on my Greek mythology. As if to confirm this thought of mine, Zeus sent a spark of light streaking across the cloudy sky. It reached from one

black cloud to another, stretching, like that one painting of Jesus (you know which one I'm talking about; I may have minored in art history but I don't remember everything I learned) and I thought of how I reached towards you and took your hand in mine.

But I'd rather run my finger over your Grecian nose than study these myths, as it's so pointed, so tilted, and the way it caves and curves sends booms and echoes through my heart.

Though I may find solace among Socrates and Sophocles and all their friends, you make my world brighter and my heart so much lighter. And you turn my internal dialogue into poetry and my insides into a muddled befuddled soup.

The lightning leapt and danced as it dared to brighten up the sky, split the world in two, and connect two otherwise unrelated beings or halves of the sky, much like you and I did that day. And I wanted to reach across the sky, like the lightning, and pull you closer to me, once again.

I used to hate the sound of my name, the syllables and letters crashing into one another in an entirely ungraceful way until I heard it roll off of your tongue and into my ear.

When I say my name I sound like the blandest brown-haired girl sitting in the back of the classroom answering to a roll call but when you do I sound like a Swiss mountain, an Italian wine, or even the subject of a poem by Neruda or Whitman. When you're the one introducing me to the world, I feel beautiful. And for once in my life, I loved my name. But only because you were the one saying it.

And for once, I could look in the mirror without looking away because you taught me to see myself through your eyes. And when I looked at myself that way, I felt like the belle of the ball.

And when you sat with me by this same window and listened to me talk about the love I have in my heart for art and the earth and its beautiful people and I knew I was rambling something awful, going on and on about Picasso and how far up his ass I was, but you stayed and sat and stared and listened. And you smiled. You smiled so beautifully.

Somehow I could tell you something you've known for years and you'd listen so attentively that I'd feel as though I were teaching you something new. I could read you your own birth certificate and you'd thank me for opening my mouth. The same mouth that was slapped in the past by others for simply speaking her mind. Sewn shut. Shuttered and closed. And right then I knew that you were something special, Amy.

And you had so much power and influence over me. And you knew this. And you never used it to your advantage. Not once, despite you knowing how weak and sensitive and vulnerable I am. Instead of breaking me down and using the scraps to build bricks to hoist yourself up, you find new bricks elsewhere to place underneath me to lift me higher, higher, higher.



And I hear the thunder crack. It sounds like it's coming closer. And I wish you were coming closer to me right now. We'd sit here, sipping tea, snuggling with each other, a cat laying across both of our laps, listening to each other and loving on each other. Each of us, together.

And as the rain poured onwards and downwards I was cozily comfortable, wrapped in my thoughts of you. And these thoughts kept me warmer than the blanket around my body did. And I wished you could be here to share the covers with me.

And after a little bit, the sky stopped crying and I thought I'd at least try to take up the task for her, to spare her the task and save some of her waters, for she had the entire world to water. Her brows were still cross so I knew she could start up again at any moment, but I decided it was my time to go and see you.

So I set my half-full mug down on the windowsill, picked up my snoozing kitty and gently placed her on a cushiony pillow on a stool standing by my chair's side. I stood and draped the blanket around my shoulders like a cloak, then slowly made my way to my closet, feeling like a goddess of sadness and lovelorn.

I pulled the closet doors open, and as my arms raised from either side of my body, I let the blanket drop from its place on my shoulders. And I stood there, looking into my closet. When the doors hit their stoppers, there was a small noise like a door closing on a movie set; real, but not real enough. And the noise must have floated its way towards my cat, because I heard her meow. I glanced over at her, her ears perked up, and she looked sleepily around the room, then jumped down from her makeshift bed and ran into the kitchen.

"Sorry, love. Didn't mean to wake you," I called after her. I paused after speaking, keeping my mouth open slightly, as one does when gently concentrating, straining to hear any and all sounds coming from the kitchen. None came, and I smiled with the left half of my mouth, showing an expression probably resembling more of a smirk than a smile, then turned back to the closet. My kitty had probably already fallen back asleep, knowing her.

I took out one of my plain black tee shirts and softly laid it down on our small bed as it stood right there next to me. Then, I scoured the shelves and hangers, looking for that one pair of black skinny jeans you told me made me look like a rockstar, and after some pushing and shoving I found them and placed them next to the shirt. I took two, three pairs of thick socks from out of my drawer and pulled them onto my feet, knowing the shoes I'd be wearing would be a tad too big for me, and I had to prepare accordingly. And then I put the rest of my outfit on.

And as I thought of you, my pace grew slower and my soul grew melancholy as I took off my cozy comfortable at-home clothes and slid into an all-black ensemble. And the sky seemed to peek and see me changing into the darkest of clothes, and she too grew dark again.

I match the sky, I thought.

I came into the kitchen and checked on my cat, and sure enough, she was asleep atop the counter. I stroked her fluffy back twice, each time in the same manner.

By the door, I looked at the shoe pile. I then picked up the black combat boots and tugged them on. The maroon ones sat there, staring at me, wondering why I didn't choose them to wear, since I usually did. And they fit me much better than the ones I was pulling on now.

"Why aren't you wearing us, Mom?" the maroon ones seemed to ask.

"I'm sorry, I can't today," I thought. But felt guilty. But knew I had to do what I was doing.

Thanks to the boots, my feet were sleek and black and shiny, and the rain outside would only make them more so. And I felt powerful and confident, the way boots like this always made me feel. But then I remembered where I was going and I grew somber again, and no boots could boost me up like you could. But you weren't here.

And I remembered the day you and I went to the mall to escape the rain, and we ended up buying ourselves these matching boots. The ones I wore now. But mine were maroon and yours were black and I wonder if that was a sign the universe gave us in regards to what was going to happen.

I remember I stood there, looking at the colorful shoe section and you stood there too, right by my side. You were shorter than me by just a couple of inches, but your feet were somehow bigger than mine. My disproportional cutie.

You had pointed to the pink boots. "I like these, Mona. Do you?"

I looked and then said, "On you? Hell yes. On me? Hell no."

You smiled, but also kind of pouted; some sort of half and half expression on your face.

"Why not on you?"

I placed a hand on your shoulder. "Because you can rock pink shiny combat boots but I will look like, uh," I paused.

"Like what?" she asked.

I had to think, but then said, "I don't know, like I accidentally melted cotton candy onto a raincoat and plastered it onto my feet. Lolita candy chic, or something." Great description. Makes perfect sense.

She furrowed her brow, trying to look cross, but instead looked confused and didn't manage to hide the giggle that snuck out. In a second, the two of us were laughing.



Deep laughs, my deep voice and her bright one mixing into a cacophony where neither of us knew what the fuck we were doing but at least we were having a good time. And the sound of us laughing must have alerted the shopkeeper from the back and he came up to us. I was instantly jealous of the gauges in his ear, and I subconsciously tugged on my own earlobe, wishing I had some of my own.

“Hi, ladies. Can I help you find anything today?” he’d asked.

She’d turned around and smiled at him. “Hi, do you have these in a size ten?” She pointed to the very-pink shoes.

He nodded, and said, “We should, I’ll go check!”

And he went to check. But they didn’t, and instead you settled on black, saying it was classic and rather standard and would go with everything, unlike the pink ones. You looked like you were content with having the black ones. But I saw in your heart that you wanted the pink ones quite badly, and I made a mental note to myself to order you a pair online in your size when we got home. And I reminded myself in the next store. And the next. And in the next, I sent myself a text saying “buy pink boots when home,” just so I wouldn’t forget. But you never got home.

And now here I stand by the door, our door, wishing the boots she bought were pink instead of black. Wishing it was just a stupid coincidence and not an omen of what was to come. I stand wishing I didn’t have to wear black to see you today. I was wishing you and I could take an umbrella and walk to town under the rain instead of me taking a walk alone under a cloudy sky to see your stone. And I wished I could see your name in my notifications and your head on your pillow instead of your name on a rock and your body under a headstone. And most of all, I wished I were the one who was in the driver’s seat when we were hit, because then you’d still be here and I wouldn’t. And even if I had to give up my life for you to have yours, you know I would do that. And I wish I could have.

I was hit once, when we were collided with, and twice, when the doctors told me there was nothing more they could do for you. And the second hit hurt considerably more than the first.

With my broken arm and broken heart I came to see you in the bed next to mine and I kissed you goodbye.

And so today, I walked as the rain softly tickled my hair and bounced off of the leather of my jacket. I was my own little black rain cloud as I walked towards your resting place. When I was about halfway, the rain began to pour. But I didn’t quicken my pace. I was in no rush to leave you. I had nowhere to be besides by your side.

I have a rose gold necklace with the coordinates of where you are, and on the flip side it says your name. Every time I see someone wearing the pink boots you wanted, I feel guilt rushing through me. I can’t help thinking that if we had bought you the pink boots you’d still be here. And my heart tells me so, but my brain chastises her for being illogical. Like always, I don’t know which one to listen to.

And with thoroughly soaked hair and a dripping heart I pushed the woven metal gate open and walked into the field that is home for those who are no longer.

I followed the path to the crossroads where the east and west lines intersect, then turned left and made my way to the oak tree, because I knew you were there underneath it. I'd picked that plot because in the summer it would be shady, and in the winter you'd be protected from the snow by the branches above. In the spring and fall you'd have the changing leaves to look at above you: pinks and whites in the former and yellows and reds in the latter.

Your name was etched into the stone just the way it was before: Amy Tailor. The dates below were all too familiar. The first was one of balloons and parties and presents and the second was of tears and hearses and things gone too soon.

April 15th, 1992 — March 3rd, 2016.

"Amy Tailor," I whispered as I knelt down and placed a hand on the flowers by your stone. The rain continued, just as hard as before, but the thick oak leaf-ridden branch above our heads kept me drier than the skies above had, but the occasional drop managed to sneak through and land atop of me.

Amy Tailor.

Also known as Amy. My Amy. My one and only.

Amy.

Mona and Amy.

Monamy.

Mon ami.

Mon amour.

I glanced at my left hand, and sure enough, the ring she had picked for me was still there, on its rightful place on the ring finger. And I knew the one I picked for you was on yours, too. Because I had checked to make sure before they closed your casket.

"If only we made it four more months, Amy. Then we'd be married," I whispered, choking up. "Together for eternity."

I was crying now, but I only knew so after the fact, as the rain distracted me from myself. And I was grateful for the rain because maybe like this Amy wouldn't know I was sad. She wouldn't know I was crying. She'd think the water above her was just the rain. The symptoms and side effects of the booming thunder, and not the aches and pains of my broken heart. But at the same time, I wanted her to know. I wanted her to know how much I missed her, and how she'd never be forgotten. And I sat there with her, kneeling on the muddy dirt for hours.

And when the skies grew dark and dusk came, I had to pry myself away from you, because I could stay with you forever, but you needed your rest. I stood up slowly, looked at the sky, then stretched my arms toward the stars.

I used to think there was nothing for me in this world but that was before I met you.



And after I met you, I used to think that maybe there was some beauty in this world, and something worth living for, a different something for everyone. In my case it was a someone.

And my someone was gone.

And I used to think we'd grow old together, but I've aged ten years a day since you've been gone. But you'll stay twenty-three, pretty and perfect in my heart and mind forever.

And when I'm wrinkled and old and sitting on a rocking chair with the cats we've always wanted sitting at my feet I won't be sitting beside anyone else but the memory of you, and you'll be your bright-eyed pretty pastel young adult self, outshining me in life and in death. And I don't mind at all.

And I used to think you were the one for me.

But I don't anymore.

I look down at your headstone one more time, then kneel on the rain-soaked ground next to your name, and place a hand there, lit up by the rising moon.

"Now, I don't think," I whispered.

"I know."

## Where Do We Go From Here? by Natalia Zecca-Naples

There aren't a lot of female serial killers.

That's not to say there aren't any, but they're an anomaly. Something special.

Lucy prided herself on that, and even more so on the fact that she was probably the last person anyone would think of as dangerous. Between her waist-long wavy blonde hair that shimmered in the sun and bounced in cadence with her bubbly laugh, her petite frame, and her light-hearted Valley Girl way of talking, she was the picture of girlish innocence, and she knew it. She thrived on it. It made everything so much easier for her.

She wasn't surprised when a car sidled over off the highway, its wheels crunching the gravel as the gleaming SUV braked to a halt a couple feet from where she stood, thumb up and flashing a coquettish smile. She rarely had to wait more than a few moments before someone took her bait, and this time was no exception. The tinted window hummed as the driver rolled it down.

"Where're you headed, sweetheart?"

Lucy flashed a grin at the man inside, pleased to see that he was alone. She cast a quick, covert glance in both directions, but it was hardly necessary. There were no other cars on the road.

"Parkersburg" came her quick reply, in a tone that made it seem more like a question than an answer. She smiled again, flashing her pearl white teeth and batting her large doe-like green eyes expectantly.

"Well, you're in luck. I'm headed to Marietta. Hop in."

She grinned widely as he unlocked the door, and lithely slid into the passenger seat as the driver introduced himself. He was middle-aged, mousy and soft-spoken – utterly innocuous, the kind of man that would be putty in a woman's hands.

"I'm Louisa," she lied effortlessly. "Thank you so, so much for giving me a ride, Mark." The silky seductive tone of her voice made the man shift uncomfortably in the driver's seat as he shifted the car into gear and pulled back onto Route 50.

"A pretty little thing like you shouldn't be hitchhiking," he reprimanded her gently, his voice tinged with nervousness and an almost paternal note of concern. "Lots of crazies out there. You could get hurt."

\*\*\*\*\*

For a few moments they drove in silence, but the awkward tension that hung in the air made it seem much longer. Mark was struggling to keep his eyes on the road, and kept casting furtive glances at the pretty girl sitting in his passenger seat. She was twirling her thumbs in her lap, and he traced his way up and down her body with his eyes. He noticed her slender legs and the way her jeans hugged every curve as if they had been painted on, and the simple elegance of the amethyst pendant that rested on her buxom chest. But what really caught his attention was her hair, and he could hardly resist the temptation to just reach out and touch it. It looked so soft, so silky. Every now and then she would run her fingers through it or twirl it around her forefinger as she smacked her chewing gum, and he imagined what it would feel like to stroke it for himself. The thought alone nearly made him shiver with anticipation, and it took every ounce of willpower he possessed to keep his eyes on the road as he grasped the steering wheel with a white-knuckled grip.

This is wrong, he thought to himself. I wasn't going to do this again.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was only one rule, and the rule was simple.

If he didn't make a move, she wouldn't hurt him. All he had to do was take her from Point A to Point B without trying to fuck her or rape her or pressure her into blowing him. Simple enough, right? Sure, it was an unspoken rule, but telling him what the stakes were, what the rule was...well, that would ruin the game. Besides, if he violated the rule, did he really deserve to live anyway?

For her part, Lucy did try not to work the men up too much, in the interest of fairness. She could hardly help the fact that she exuded seduction, but that was no



excuse for them to try to make a move on her, a perfect stranger who – for all they knew – was just a vulnerable girl in a situation over which they had all of the control. Of course, that wasn't actually the case: she had a 10-inch fixed blade hunting knife resting in her cute hobo purse that she could deftly pull out and use before you could say "blue balls," and you'd be amazed how many times she'd had occasion to use it. No shortage of perverts who would take advantage of any opportunity to get their dick wet, even if – or, more likely, especially if – it involved coercing a helpless, trusting girl. Over time, Lucy had been equally intrigued and disgusted to find that that was what seemed to seem to get them riled up, the idea that they could force a girl to pleasure them in any way they wanted in this kind of situation without even brandishing a weapon – the implication alone was enough to get just about any girl to go along with whatever kind of fun they had in mind.

But not Lucy.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mark was perturbed by the unsettling moistness of the leather steering wheel as his palms grew slick with sweat. Every now and then the girl would ask some benignly rapid question in an attempt to break the suffocating tension that hung between them, and he struggled to answer, never offering more than a word or two in response. It's not right, he kept telling himself over and over in his head. You don't have to do this, she's just a kid...

That voice was strong, but the other feeling was stronger, and growing stronger with each passing minute. He felt his heartbeat quicken as beads of sweat started to roll down the back of his neck and every hair stood on end, even though the AC was going and the dashboard informed him that the car was a balmy 76 degrees. The sensation was electrifying, egging him on, and he felt its intensity growing every time he glanced at her, heard her sing-song voice, breathed in the delicate scent of her perfume that hung in the air. She was different from the others, he could see that, he could feel it. The others had been common and filthy. Cheap. This one, though...oh, she was so much different. Something fine and rare, pure and delicate. Soft. Feminine. Innocent.

Something for the real connoisseur.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ahead of them, the sign for the Deerwalk exit loomed against an amarillo sunset. Looks like he's going to make good on his word, Lucy thought to herself. She was hardly surprised. The man – Mark – had been nervous just sitting near her, and she had noticed the modest wedding band on his ring finger. Sure, he had ogled her a couple of times; she was amused by his utterly futile attempt to be inconspicuous in doing so. But she could hardly blame him for that. This car ride was probably the closest he had been to a woman that wasn't his wife in a long time, let alone a young, attractive girl. And all alone, just the two of them. No wonder the poor schmuck was shifting around and sweating so much. Probably an accountant, father of four, married his high school sweetheart...you know the type. Boring as all hell. Probably had

daughters of his own, they might even be close to her age...heck, maybe that was why he had picked her up. It was kind of sweet, albeit just a teensy bit disappointing. She had been hoping for some fun tonight.

\*\*\*\*\*

This is it, Mark thought to himself. The sun was setting fast; it would be dark in another twenty minutes or so. This was his chance. Just a couple miles up ahead was an exit that led to a county road that ran through a small, unincorporated town with a big lake, a couple scattered farmsteads, and a whole lot of untamed wilderness. It wasn't his usual dumping ground, but he was familiar enough with the area – it would do. There was hardly ever any traffic, and his car was inconspicuous. Remarkably forgettable. He would have time out there, and plenty of space to do what he wanted – what he needed – to do.

He hit the turn signal.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lucy had been absentmindedly admiring the greenery that ran along the highway when the ticking of the turn signal roused her from her reverie.

"We're pulling off the highway?" Her voice was inquisitive, and a bit startled, but not alarmed.

"Just for a moment, I'm sorry," Mark replied apologetically, nearly stuttering from abashed nervousness. "I hope you don't mind, it's just...well, I need to...you know...relieve myself, and there aren't many rest stops out this way and I'm afraid I can't wait until we get to Parkersburg."

"Oh, that's no problem at all, I totally understand," Lucy said indulgently.

Mark couldn't bring himself to meet her eyes.

"Again, I apologize. It should only take a moment or two. I suppose I should hav--"

"Mark, it's fine, really," Lucy blithely reassured him, laying her hand on his pallid, clammy forearm. "Just don't get us lost, it's getting dark out here."

\*\*\*\*\*

Within moments of pulling off Route 50, the SUV was navigating a circuitous gravel street that soon gave way to a dirt road in a woeful state of disrepair. Lucy heard the sound of low-hanging tree branches scraping against the hood of the car, which was engulfed on either side by trees and brambles. The headlights were on, but they were of little service. She could hardly see anything up ahead, and the thick foliage that surrounded them seemed impenetrable. She discreetly pulled her bag off the floorboard into her lap.

It's always the ones you'd least expect, she mused to herself.



Maybe there would be some fun tonight after all.

\*\*\*\*\*

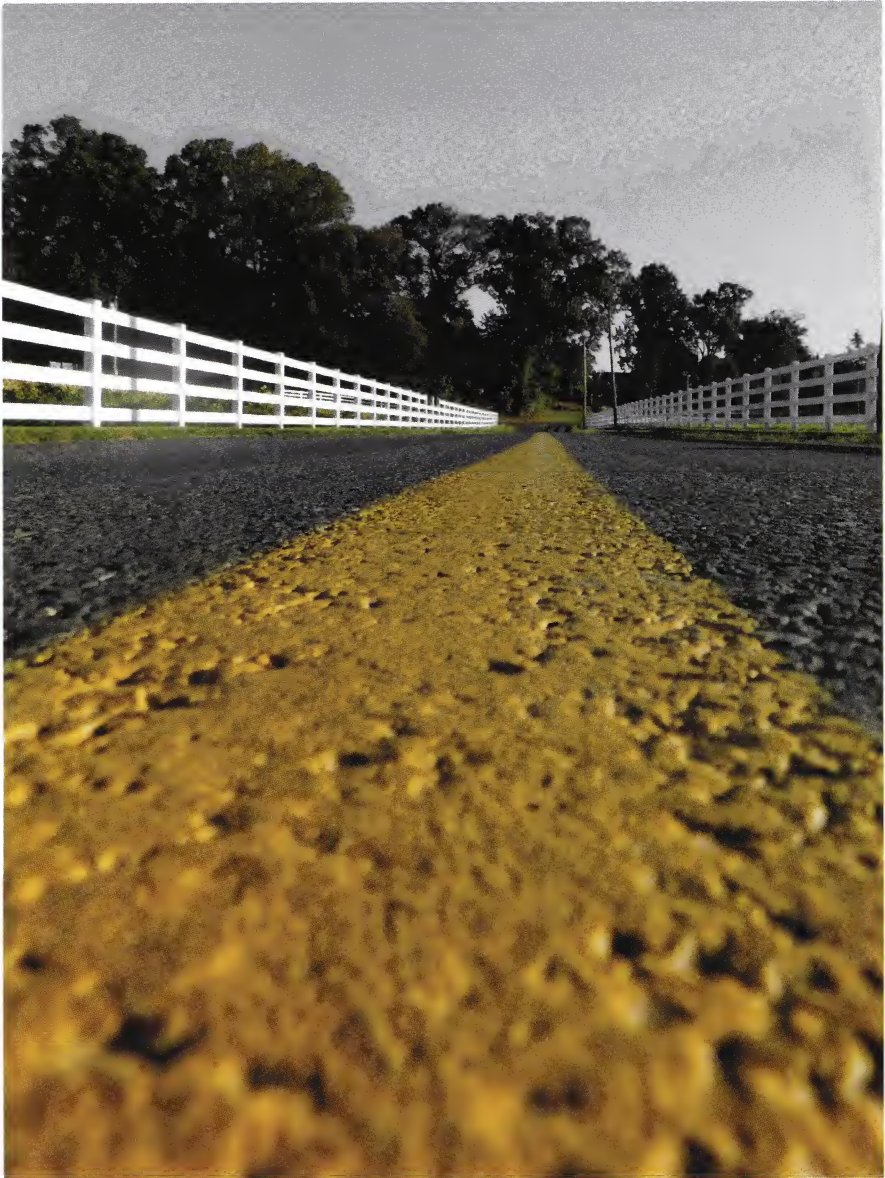
Once he came to a point where the road would permit them to go no further, Mark shifted into park and killed the lights. The girl didn't notice; she seemed too preoccupied, fiddling with something in her bag.

Probably looking for her cell phone, he thought to himself with some bemusement. She didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of getting service out here. His left hand was already stroking the grip of the .22 he kept in the driver's side door pocket, and he felt himself grow hard. He looked over at her, and she met his gaze, both of their eyes sparkling with anticipation.

"Looks like this is the end of the road, Mark," Lucy said playfully. "Where do we go from here?"







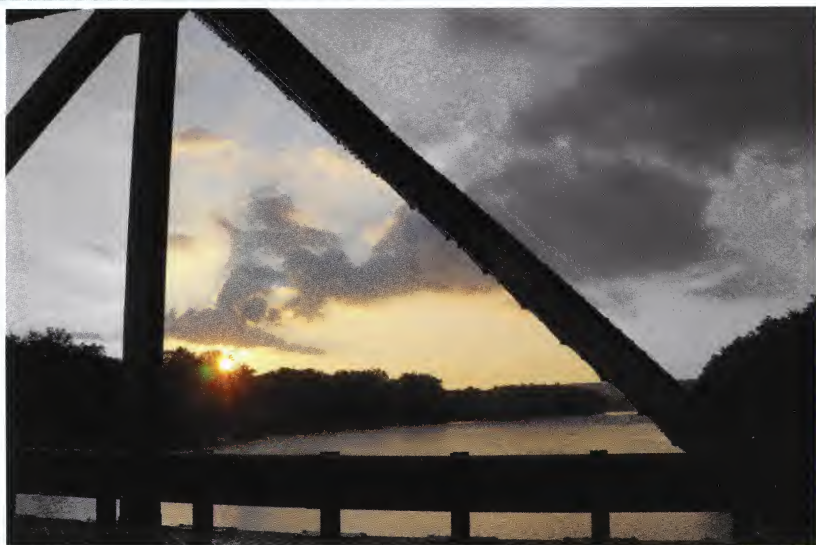
*IT WAS TAKEN OUT THERE — LESLEE BLAUNT*





UNTITLED — LINDA FANNING LEFEVRE





DELTA DUSK — SARA ROUNTREE



INTO THE DISTANCE — JULIA LEHMAN



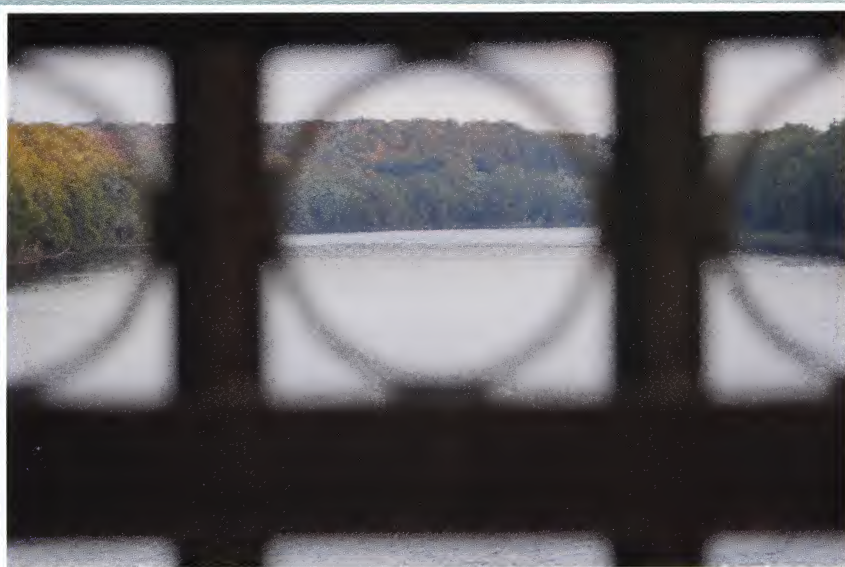


*THE JUNGLE - EMILY KENNEDY*





ANYWHERE ST. — LIZMAY ORTIZ  
ARTS ACADEMY AT BENJAMIN RUSH



HOPE IN FOCUS — SARA ROUNTREE





POST RAIN — EMILY KENNEDY





*CLOSE CALL - EMILY KENNEDY*





CASCADE — SARA ROUNTREE



AUTUMN SOLACE — TIARA DWIGHT







NIGHTLIGHT — SARA ROUNTREE



PAST AND PRESENT — KATIE DeANGELO





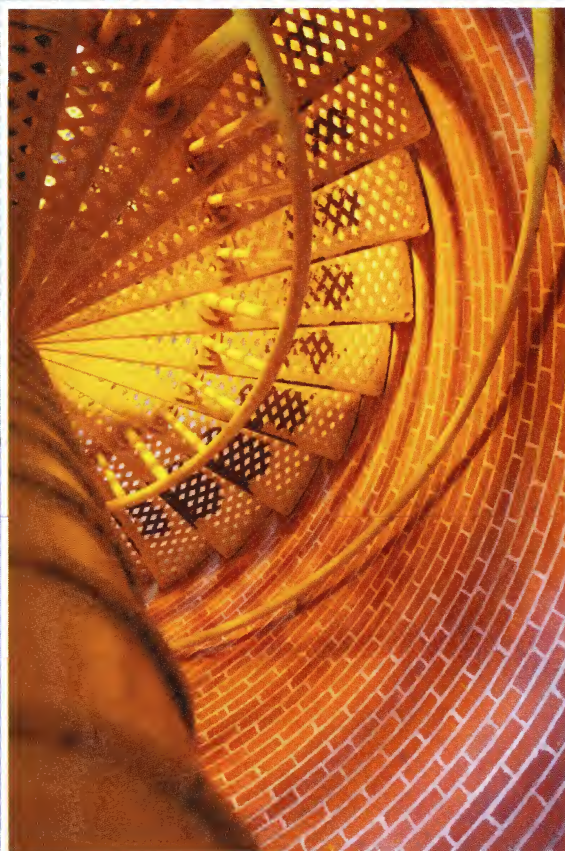


*THE OTHER SIDE - KATIE DeANGELO*





GOODBYE, MANHATTAN — JULIA LEHMAN



LOOKING BACK — AMBER DEGRECORIO





Oooooo AAAAAH OooooH - Emily Kennedy







MICULA BRIDGE IN TACNA, PERU — KIARA LYNN GARCIA



THE RED DOOR — SARA ROUNTREE







GINZA — LINDA FANNING LEFEVRE





*PATH THROUGH WINTER— VERONICA FEIBUSCH*







## Minutes Till Midnight by Natalia Zecca-Naples

Setting: [Georgia, 1985. A man sits alone in a spacious prison cell under the garish glow of humming florescent lights. His brows are knit in consternation, and his hands are folded tightly, white-knuckled, but he is otherwise quiet. A tray of food sits untouched on the edge of a dull steel desk. A young guard, Spencer, stands outside of the cell, visibly uncomfortable.]

Spencer

You ain't gonna touch that food, then, Jason?

Jason

(slightly startled)

Oh, no, I s'pose not.

Spencer

Yeah. Seems to me it might've occurred to them that a man's liable to lose his appetite when the state's fixin' to kill 'im in a matter'uh hours.

[Uncomfortable silence]

Spencer

(discomfited, but unwilling to bear the silence)

You know, if I got to pick a last meal, I'd have to say it'd be my old lady's chicken fried steak, some biscuits and gravy, and a big ass bucket of fries. Then uh' course a shit ton'uh cake – don't really matter which kind, but 'specially if it comes with ice cream. And root beer, too. Gotta have root beer. But not that fake shit from the Winn-Dixie, I mean the really good stuff, ya know what I mean?

Jason

I'm a Coke man, myself.

Spencer

(eagerly)

Well we can get that for ya, too! No problem!

Jason

I'm not really in the mood, right now.

Spencer

(disappointment tinging his voice)

Oh. Yeah.

Jason

Thank you though.

Spencer

Sure, man.



(pauses)

Ya know, I heard what they say you done and I have a hard time believing it. I mean-

Jason

Believe it. We've all done things we wish we hadn't. (sadly) I've got what's coming to me.

Spencer

(without conviction)

Alright. Well, I don't mean to get you all riled up.

Jason

(with a weak smile)

Sorry. You've always been real good to me, Spence. How's that boy of yours?

Spencer

(face lights up, and a broad smile spreads across his face)

Well, he just started walkin', wouldja believe it? I mean, he stumbles around a lot an' all but gol-lee! Does he move!

(he beams with pride)

Jason

(good-natured teasing)

Sounds like a smart one. Must get that from his mama.

Spencer

(smiling)

That he does, that he surely does. 'Bout the same age of that nephew of yours, isn't he?

Jason

Oh no, that was an old picture, the one you saw.

[Their tense but friendly conversation is interrupted by the arrival of four men: Father Matthew O'Mara, Warden Edwin Darrow, and two Guards.]

Warden

(with authority, but not unkindly)

It's almost time, Jason. Father O'Mara is here to serve as chaplain in your final hours.

(pauses)

I didn't see your attorney here. Would you like me to call-

Jason

I told him to stay away. The man won't shut up about appeals, and I never liked lawyers much anyway. (with a wry smile) You know, it was a lawyer who sent me here.

(pauses thoughtfully, and then adds sadly)

Or I guess it was me who done that.

[Brief but awkward silence]

Warden

Well, we'll leave you two to speak in private. But Father, you'll have to stay outside his cell. (he gestures toward a small chair by the wall)

O'Mara

Very well, Warden.

Warden

You've got just over half an hour, Jason. I'd suggest you make your peace with God.

[The Warden and his entourage briskly vacate the narrow corridor, and a heavy metal door swings shut behind them. Spencer, who was previously stationed outside the cell, now positions himself outside the door, where he can observe the prisoner and chaplain through a panel of thick glass, but can hear nothing. The two men sit in an awkward, heavy silence.]

O'Mara

I'm going to be straightforward with you, Mr. Garnett. I've never done this before.

Jason

That's alright, Father. Neither have I.

O'Mara

(very uncomfortably)

I-well-the chaplain who usually serves this facility is a Protestant. But you specifically requested a Catholic priest, if I'm not mistaken. Were you raised in the faith?

Jason

Oh yes, Father, born and baptized and raised Catholic.

[An uncomfortable silence lingers in the air between them]

Jason

I don't have much time left, Father. I need-I need to-Christ, this is hard (tears well in his eyes, but he cracks a smile) I know, I know, I shouldn't take the Lord's name in vain.

O'Mara

Well, Mr. Garnett, I think – under the circumstances – I can excuse you.

Jason

Not even one Hail Mary as penance? You're a pushover, Father.

(pauses)

And call me Jason.

[The uncomfortable silence returns. O'Mara regards Jason, a handsome, fair-haired man with gentle features and bright blue eyes.]



O'Mara

(almost unintentionally, blurting out the question that has been weighing on his mind)

You really didn't file any appeals?

Jason

I really didn't.

(shifts on the hard concrete uncomfortably)

Father, if I tell you something now – here – it's like in the confession booth, right? You can't tell anyone?

O'Mara

(taken aback, somewhat frightened)

Well, yes...I mean, yes, I can hear your confession.

Jason

(impatiently)

That isn't what I asked. What I tell you here – what I tell you now – you can't tell anyone? You won't tell anyone?

O'Mara

(troubled, visibly perturbed)

I will not.

Jason

Well, two can keep a secret if one is dead, I s'pose.

(Jason's head sinks to his knees, as if physically weighed down by the secret he has carried so long.)

O'Mara

(with mixed curiosity and fear)

What is it? Were there...were there...more?

Jason

(weakly, tears streaming down his face)

There weren't any.

O'Mara

(shocked, but as if he has misunderstood)

What do you mean? Jason...I've read about your case. You've never-not once-made claims of innocence. Are you saying that you'd like me to contact your lawyer? Are you thinking of filing an appeal?

Jason

(passionately, with renewed vigor)

Absolutely fucking NOT!

[The priest looks at the man with surprise and fear. The guard outside, having heard this loud outburst, peers in through the glass.]

Jason

(tears streaming down his face)

I wanted to take this secret to the grave. But I can't. I'm not looking to save my life.

(quietly, almost to himself)

My life was forfeit the day I met Melissa.

O'Mara

(not understanding)

If it might ease your burden, tell me whatever it is you wish to say.

Jason

(wistfully, in his own world, placing his hand on the Bible by his side and caressing it fondly, protectively)

She was beautiful. She still is, I'm sure. Of course, she can't come here now. Not married like she is, and a mother.

[He pauses reflectively, but O'Mara, sensing that there is more he wishes to say, says nothing.]

Jason

Beautiful, but damn, is that woman a firecracker. I wonder if he'll take after her in that regard?

O'Mara

(curiously)

Who?

Jason

(not hearing him)

I loved Erin, I truly did...

O'Mara

(interrupts, having recognized the name)

Erin Calhoun? The woman whom you were convicted of murdering?

Jason

Yes. I loved her, and she loved me, and we were going to be a family. I never wanted to stray from her – honestly, I didn't. But Melissa...God damn, there is something about that woman. Something beyond this world, something beyond the understanding of men. (slyly) I'll bet she could even seduce you, Father.

[O'Mara smiles, but says nothing]

Jason

She was only 19 when I met her. I had already proposed to Erin, and I wanted Erin to be my wife. Nothing I did with Melissa ever changed how I felt about Erin. You gotta believe that, Father.

(the tears come faster)

I loved that woman with all my heart and soul, and nothing I ever did, nothing on the face of God's green earth will change that. I love her.



[Silence, broken only by Jason's cries, which have become sobs]

Jason

Now I don't blame Melissa. I don't blame no one but myself for what happened. (he clenches his fists as the tears sting his eyes) But Erin...oh God, what a woman. She was beautiful too, in every way a woman can be beautiful. She was kind, and soft-spoken, and loving and caring and if I could do it all again I would never have looked at another woman in my life. I would give up anything for one more moment with her, and if there's some cold comfort in this whole thing it's that maybe – maybe – God in his mercy might let me have one more moment with the woman I love once I'm dead.

[He cries again. O'Mara is visibly shaken, and glances at the clock]

Jason

I didn't even know Melissa thought we were a couple. To me, it was always just a fling. We were both engaged to other people. We only hooked up a coupla times, and I swear, I wore a rubber every one of 'em, 'cept once. 4th of July weekend and it just seemed too damn hot for a raincoat. And it weren't too long after that one time, I find out Erin is pregnant. Oh, Father, there is no sweeter joy in this sad world than finding out that you're gonna be a daddy. I already had the ring on her finger, and we were gonna live in my Daddy's old house in Madison. I was running the shop and makin' fine money, and everything seemed perfect. Damn, it seemed better than perfect, the kind of good that God gets jealous of. A good that's too good to be.

(pauses)

And I s'pose it was.

O'Mara

(thoughtfully)

There was Melissa.

Jason

(passionately)

I didn't want her no more. She was sexy as all hell, but she got crazy sometimes. Those blue bloods sure can get hot under the collar. And besides, I had my Erin, and my baby – I didn't wanna fool around with her no more.

O'Mara

So you broke it off with her?

Jason

Hell, I didn't even think I had to! We just fooled around a couple times, we weren't goin' steady or nothin'! Besides, she was engaged to another guy – a lawyer, even then he was making a name for himself. She had a good life ahead'a her too. But one day she comes stormin' into my shop, tearin' around like a god damn hurricane, askin' where I been. Tellin' me she won't be thrown away. I tried to get her calmed down, I told her 'bout Erin. I thought, you know, bein' a woman 'specially...I thought she'd understand. And she got all quiet and just said "I see." That's all she said, and I thought that was the end of it. (painfully) I thought that was the end of it.

[O'Mara sits quietly, listening]

Jason

I went out a few days later, took my dog Luke and walked down the long road to the cabin by the lake. Since my mama died my daddy moved down into that cabin... couldn't stand to live in the big house all alone. That's how I feel 'bout the whole world, now that Erin's not in it. I can't hardly stand to be here no more without her, without the child she was carryin' for me. (he knows he is running out of time, so he swallows the lump in his throat, fights back the tears) And so me and Erin was livin' in the house, and him down by the lake. He was gettin'...well...the doctors called it dementia, but I think after over 50 years of marriage, his brain just forgot how to work without hers there beside it. I wasn't there more than an hour, checkin' on him, makin' sure he didn't need nothin'. Then me n' Luke walked back to the house. (shudders) I'll never forget that walk. It was the last time I was really happy, the last time I had any peace.

[Jason is silent for a moment, then continues his story]

Jason

When I got back to the house...Satan himself couldn't conjure up a more hateful, terrifying, God-forsaken image than what I saw. My Erin, my sweet, sweet Erin, all stretched out on the floor like and bleedin'. At first I thought she fell down the stairs, cause she was lyin' at the bottom of 'em. Then I saw where she had stabbed her. All over her chest, but mostly...(shudders, crying, gesturing towards his stomach)... mostly...

[O'Mara nods, horrified, but understanding what he means]

Jason

Then I looked up, and I saw her. Melissa. She looked terrified. All the anger was gone, and she looked like a scared little girl. Her hand that held the knife was shakin'. I had my hand on Erin's neck, tryin', tryin' to find a pulse, and I couldn't. She was gone. She was...she was just...gone. I remember the pool of blood spreading out...her hands were over her belly, she died trying to protect that piece of us...our baby...but her belly and her hands were all torn and tattered, and the blood spread out like water all around her. And I remember her hair...she had the loveliest shiny long brown hair, and I moved it away from the blood. I knew she wouldn't want it dirty.

[He pauses to compose himself, and then continues. There is no time to waste.]

Jason

Melissa was crying, and I hated her, oh God how I hated her in that moment. She tried to run to me, and I shoved her away so hard she nearly fell over. I wanted to take the knife from her hand and run it through her over and over again. But she was crying and she looked so small...I still can't believe that a girl so small could do so much in so short a time. I looked into her eyes, those deep blue pools that had seduced me time and again, but all I could see were Erin's. They were hazel when she was alive, but it was like the sparkle in them died, like a light behind them was extinguished...



they just looked brown and cold. And I heard Melissa begging me to help her, to fix it. She kept saying that she loved me. That she adored me. Those words meant nothing because she had just taken everything that I loved and adored in the world and snuffed it out. It meant nothing and I grabbed her shoulders and shoved her away, I was gonna call 911. Then I heard say it.  
(he looks off into an invisible distance)

O'Mara

What did she say, Jason?

Jason

She told me she was pregnant.

[There is a long silence. O'Mara, stunned and silent, suddenly stirs]

O'Mara

(rising from his chair)

I will call the Governor. I believe you, Jason, I believe you're innocent. We'll get a stay of execution. We'll-

Jason

(rising, grips the bars angrily)

We'll do nothing! I'm doing this for Jack! I'M DOING THIS FOR MY SON!

O'Mara: (passionately) How do you know the child is even yours?! You said yourself that she was engaged!

Jason

No. He was away that summer.

O'Mara

There could have been other men!

Jason

No. We always had to be so careful...she knew so many people, and so did he.  
(thoughtfully) There were no others.

O'Mara

Maybe your pride won't abide it, but there might have been.

Jason

(turning to retrieve his Bible)

No.

[Jason opens the Bible and pulls out a photo, fading in color and lightly wrinkled, of a young boy smiling. He has pale skin, rosy cheeks, and sandy blond hair that just touches the tops of his ears.]

Jason

(with a sad smile)

He's my son. She sent this picture of 'im...look. Look at his eyes.

[O'Mara looks into his eyes, and then looks closely at the eyes of the child in the photograph. At first he sees nothing, but then he notices a small detail and looks back and forth at the man standing before him and the child in the photograph.]

Jason

(smiling broadly)

You see it, then?

O'Mara

Only just. The flecks of gold in his irises.

Jason

My daddy always called it the twinkle in her eyes. I have my mama's eyes, see, and she had that same thing. Little flecks of gold in the blue of her eyes. I have it too. (he turns the photo so he can look at it himself) And so does my son.

O'Mara

Even if he is your son, do you think this is what he would want?

Jason

There's no other way.

O'Mara

We can try to get you a stay of execution. We can file appeals-

Jason

(forcefully)

No. No, I won't do that. In less than an hour, I'll be gone. This whole, horrible thing will be over, finally.

O'Mara

And they'll have executed an innocent man!

Jason

I'm not innocent. Erin would still be alive if I hadn't hooked up with Melissa. (tearfully) They'd both still be alive.

O'Mara

That's not what I mean...do you really think Jack would want his father to die like this, and for a crime he didn't even commit?

Jason

He doesn't know that I'm his father, and if I have anything to say about it, he never will. I won't have him growin' up with that burden on his shoulders. Absolutely not. Right now, he's growin' up the son of a rich lawyer and a pretty housewife. That ain't



a bad life, that's a respectable life. I want him to have everything he wants and needs, I want him to have a future. They can give it to him. If this came out, his whole world would crash around him. He would be...the son of a murderer...

O'Mara

He already is the son of a murderer.

Jason

He doesn't know it. Nobody knows it, save three people in the whole world. And at midnight tonight, that number goes down to two. And you gotta swear to me that you'll keep it that way.

O'Mara

(sadly, with reluctant resignation)

If you're certain that's what you want...

Jason

It's what I want.

O'Mara

I give you my word.

(pauses)

I have to ask, Jason. Why did you tell me this?

Jason

(quietly)

It's selfish, I guess. I know I shoulda just taken it to the grave. Safer that way. But... well, I know it sounds stupid...but I pray for him every night. Every single night, before I go to sleep. If it's not too much to ask...could you pray for him too, Father? Once I'm gone?

O'Mara

I will, Jason. Every night. I'll pray for you both.

Jason

(smiling a sad smile that never reaches his eyes)

He's gonna be a lucky kid, havin' a priest prayin' for him every night.

O'Mara

He's lucky to have a father who would die a painful, thankless death just to give him a chance at a better life.

[The Warden comes in, flanked by two guards.]

Warden

It's time, Jason.

[Jason comes to the door as the cell is unlocked, and allows himself to be shackled.

O'Mara walks behind the condemned man, the Warden, and guards as they walk to

the execution chamber. Jason is led in, accompanied by the guards. Spencer stands outside the door. O'Mara stops there and waits with him.]

Spencer

You ain't gonna watch the execution? He didn't invite no family or nothin' and I'm sure you could sit in the viewin' room. Be a friendly face for him to see 'fore he rides the lightnin'.

O'Mara

No. I don't think I could.

Spencer

(uncomfortably)

Yeah. I know whatya mean.

[They and the audience can hear the Warden and Jason speaking within the death chamber.]

Warden

Jason William Garnett, do you have any final words?

[All is quiet for a moment]

Jason

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name...

Spencer

(quietly)

Is he prayin' in there?

O'Mara

(nods, seemingly distracted)

The Pater Noster.

Spencer

Don't know how much good it'll do 'im. 'cept maybe to save his soul.

O'Mara

(quietly, almost to himself)

I don't think it's himself he's praying for.

[From within the death chamber]

Jason

...deliver us from evil. Amen.

[A buzzing and all of the lights go out.]



# History's Last Request

By Emma Cameron

Abington Friends

Grade 9-10, 1st Place

When I look into the mirror  
I catch a glimpse of my father:  
his family's hands wrapped around a bottle,  
bloodlines tangled around my neck,  
suffocating me under the generations of addiction.  
The type that has poisoned our family tree for years.  
The type that turns bark black and makes leaves fall.

Every day, it climbs closer to my branches,  
and I wonder if my cousin searches  
for something in her veins.  
Maybe she thinks she can find  
herself if she escapes far enough into her arm,  
Or maybe what she thinks what she's injecting  
will erase an entire history of hurt.

Does she know that she fulfills a prophecy?  
That she admits defeat to a curse cast  
on our entire lineage,  
one that destined us into thinking  
the cure is dark magic.

A pill or a syringe that handcrafts you wings to take flight.  
Wings with feathers that will melt once you fly too high

To some, it is called inevitable.  
To others, its name is heritage.

To me, it is the warnings of my mother,  
reminding me that I am a time bomb.  
It is the flowered curtains that I keep closed,  
but it is also the chimes of broken glass  
meeting the floor when I shatter the mirror.  
If I reach far enough, past its jagged reflection of me,  
I hit something more than struggle and suffering and sorrow  
I pull out something consisting of culture  
And clarity  
Behind the mirror, I find a prettier day  
One where I can embrace my father's shadow

As I age  
I will grow into my mother's eyes  
And hopefully her smile.  
And when I give birth to you

You may feel fear while waiting  
next in line to someone so damaged,  
but I want you to know  
that just because you come from the womb  
of a wounded woman  
does not mean you have to inherit her cracks.

The only thing you need to break is the pattern,  
and every morning, when the day holds you as if you were its own  
when the sun strokes your face  
remember that flying too close will get you burned.

## Reality By Paige Real

Berks Catholic High School  
Grade 9-10, 2nd Place

Everything sounds the same  
Because it is  
Difference failed to make an appearance  
People try to blend  
They call America the great melting pot  
But really, I think high school is  
and Reality is coming to meet me.

Everyone wants to be like someone else  
They don't like who they are  
Each and every person  
Blending and mixing, personalities smudged and eroded  
to the point where no one is really themselves  
But they lie and smile and pretend everything's okay  
and Reality is coming to meet me.

They ignore their problems behind a mask of makeup and football helmets  
"Smile wide," they say, "Everything's amazing."  
Nothing is amazing or right  
But I smile anyways, and it feels fake  
I am a Cheshire Cat  
I grin no matter what  
Cuz nothing else matters but being popular  
and Reality is coming to meet me.

In a little while, no one will care who was prom queen  
But it seems a million years away, like adulthood won't ever come  
We are powerful and vulnerable all at once  
Child and adult  
Our potential's at its peak  
We can be anything and nothing  
So they ignore the fact that their bosses won't care about their hair





# Where Am I Going? Where Have I Been? By Raven Steiner

William Tennett High School  
Grade 11-12, 1st Place

I have been, forced to marry - still a child, seen as property, sold for wealth  
I have been, stuck in a kitchen, curlers in my hair and crinoline under my polka dotted skirt, cleaning all day and cooking all night, working hard and yet still judged as incompetent

I have been, replacing men in their jobs when they went off to fight, only to have the shreds of discrimination abolished - to be replaced again as soon as the bombs stopped going off

I have been, with flowers threading my hair and my thoughts, tie-dyed clothes with labels of sincerity, love, and equality

I have been, harassed in the workplace and in the classroom, forced to change my appearance or change my clothes thus inevitably taking energy and time away from my education, my career, and my future to benefit the learning of those opposite me

I have been, marching among hundreds in protest, our footprints imprinting hope and humility into the paved, cracking, fuming streets

I have seen, the true happiness in advocates for equality rising more and more frequently

I can now see the reverse.

As long as we have existed there has been struggle, there has been hate

Under every new leader there are new things we must embrace as a nation.

But the spread of

Hate, Injustice, Discrimination, Sexism, Harassment, Intolerance, Violence

Those should not be principles endorsed

After so many years

Of fighting for the opposite

We stand

Underneath the stars, Underneath a glittering congenial reality

With open arms and open mouths

Wondering where our voices have gone

Were they ever even there?

Were they ever even heard?



# The Edge of the World

By Alesandra Temerte

Central Bucks East High School

Grade 11-12, 2nd Place

I know the Earth is flat  
because I have been  
to its edge,  
and I've almost fallen off.  
I stood on the cliff  
that borders our world,  
gazing at the vast expanse  
of where I've walked  
to get there.  
I see mountains of regret  
and oceans of mistakes.  
I see fields of chances  
and cities packed with  
broken dreams.

All I want to do  
is take another

s  
t  
e  
p

and  
f  
a  
l  
l

into the sky,  
but I don't.

I am a believer  
that all things come  
full circle  
so when I feel the empty air  
beneath my feet,  
I freeze in fear.  
I try to drag myself back  
across the landscapes  
I've traversed,  
but my legs will only take me  
f o r w a r d.

And when I finally  
take that step,  
I do not fall.  
I find myself back  
on solid ground,  
the flipside  
of the Earth.  
I find myself with new  
mountains, seas,  
and chances.

I do not know where  
I am going,  
only that I am meant  
to be there,  
and this path brings  
better things.

I know that the world  
isn't round  
because I have been to  
its edge,  
and I survived.

I have been to its edge,  
and now I'm thriving  
beyond it.



# My Story by Alesandra Temerte

Central Bucks East High School

Grades 11-12, 1st Place

I am five years old. On my bed, there is a pile of thin Barbie dolls, wearing slim-fitting pink dresses with sparkling bows and sharp heels. Their eyelids are painted blue, their blonde hair is whipped back into messy braids, their frail hands are glued to their hips. I am coloring a picture of Barbie as a mermaid, surrounded by teal coral and roughly-sketched fishes. I want to be as pretty as her.

I am eight years old. On my bed, there is a stack of paperback books, pages brimming with magic and fairytales, where the damsel in distress is saved by her prince. I am dreaming of my own fairytale ending, where I am the princess, diamonds clipped around my neck, ball gown sweeping the floor. When I fall asleep, it is to Cinderella music. I wish to be rescued from the boredom of life.

I am eleven years old. On my bed, there is a laptop. I play games where I am the hero of the tale. I navigate worlds with glaciers and deserts, exchange ripped jeans for skater skirts as I please, solve puzzles and hunt for clues, and decide which paths I take. My life has no boundaries in adventure games. I hope that one day, reality will be as exciting as this.

I am fourteen years old. On my bed, there is a phone. Behind its screen, I have access to everything I could ever want. There are videos of crafts I'll never make, pictures of outfits I'll never wear, and articles about places I'll never visit. The world is so big, and I can watch it unfold from the comfort of my room. I wonder why I feel so empty.

I am now seventeen years old. On my bed, there is a journal, and every line is filled. I write stories about the heartbreaks of small-town lovers, poetry about the days when there were one too many tears, and most of all, I tell my own narrative. I pen down the places I know I will visit, journal about the adventures I find in each moment, and illustrate the treasures I find. I know I am strong. I am beautiful. I won't be a damsel-in-distress-turned-princess because I'm already the queen of my own fairytale. I have been through days when I could barely rise from bed and nights where I breathed life back into my friends for hours. I have seen the coldest winters, but I have also experienced the sun. I have battled the lowest points of my self-esteem and mental health, but I was the one that slayed those days with a sword. I no longer wish to be a Barbie because I wish to be more. In my life, I will heal others. I will continue to tell stories. And I will never stop.

On my shelf, there are more journals. I fill them with not only my dreams but also my goals. I may not be able to turn the clock and change where I've been, but I'm clutching the wheel to navigate the sea that I have yet to sail. I cannot control the winds, but I control how I handle them. The days of fiction are over because I decide where the story takes me next.

# Lucid Nightmares

By Paige Reali

Berks Catholic High School

Grade 9-10, 1st Place

Fear is dangerous. It makes you sweat, shake, and the little hairs on the back of your neck stand up. It keeps you awake at night, listening to the sounds of the horde shrieking and dragging their broken claws against the glass doors while you pray to a god that doesn't exist. But most importantly, it immobilizes you, paralyzes your limbs so you can't move. Fear can kill you.

But, in the same way fear sparks rebellions against gods and demons, fear kindles questions. If you live with fear long enough, you begin to wonder how much worse it can get, what could happen. You wonder what you could do to make your life better, how you might escape your personal hell.

These are questions that will get you killed. But man discovered many things because we asked questions. We learned how to topple empires, how to slay demons, and strike the fear of death in the immortals. History says as much, and though history is dead, I still cling to it like I am a child and it is my favorite doll. The subject I once hated is now my obsession. I sacrifice my rations for history books, my water supply for research papers. I reread the texts over and over again until I have almost memorized them.

In another world, I used to procrastinate, take for granted my phone. I had no use for history, no desire to preserve the story of our evolution. But then, I did not need to win a war everyone has already decided we lost.

"Three hours, Watcher," Annalise says, her hand held out expectantly. A steep price, over half of my remaining hours, and for a moment, I consider haggling for a better deal. I knew Annalise before the New World. She was a quiet girl with long black hair and a gentle smile. We used to sit next to each other at lunch, occasionally going over to each other's houses.

But this is not the Annalise from the Old World, just like I am not the Casey I once was. New World Annalise has dark eyes that cut through stone and uneven hair that ends around the edges of her jawline. Her clothes are stiff and practical, her hands spotted with callouses. She has become hard and cold. She will not grant me favors, and we are not friends.

Wordlessly, I hand her the electronic dog tag I keep around my neck next to my cross. Annalise brings it to hers and touches them together. They flash green briefly and then fade. When she hands me back the dog tag, I have two hours of work remaining and my rations.

Carefully, I tuck the tag inside my shirt and flash my knife at the people around me, warding off any wannabe muggers. They look away. Satisfied, I pocket the knife. Money is useless in the New World. Instead, we use dog tags to determine our worth to the community, which is decided by how many hours we log. Then, we spend the hours on necessities. It's a simple system; it's what's keeping us all alive. But it's also what's killing us. There are only so many hours we can work, and prices are steep. Already, more than one person has lost their tag to muggers.



I weave through the sea of teenagers, passing some Old World trophy cases that have been looted. This hallway used to be a high school cafeteria, the same high school all of us attended until one day, we woke up in various classrooms with dog tags, instructions on how to run our "community," and the doors locked.

Of course, there was panic. People tried to break glass, pull fire alarms, and call for help. All of that was useless. No matter what we did, the glass didn't break, all the electronics were dead—the lights didn't even turn on, and no one drove by the school. In fact, there were no cars outside or across the street. And in the eight months we've been here, we still haven't seen a car.

We read the instructions when we calmed down enough to think straight. They were very detailed, assigning each member of our "community" with a job, like "farmer" or "doctor." I was assigned as a scientist. It is my job to learn how to engineer food, recycle water, make clothes, and other necessities with the limited resources we have. Of course, the directions did not mention who wrote them, why we are here, or what happened. They did not tell us how to escape, how to contact our families, or even what happened to them. Just that everything we did must be "for the good of the community."

At first, we were evenly divided. Some of us were desperate for leadership, a system that worked, and instantly latched onto the instructions. Others of us fought, refusing to bow before the sickos who put us here. I was freaked out. But Old World Casey was already dying, and my survival instincts were emerging. I stayed neutral.

The first night was the worst, no one could sleep, and more than one of us was crying. But the first morning was the most terrifying. Our school had never invested heavily in security, so when we woke up to cameras with red, blinking lights, we were terrified. Sometime, during that first night, someone or something had placed over three hundred working cameras in every room in the school, and no one had noticed. They were watching us.

A group of students scoured the school with baseball bats and smashed every camera they found. We went to bed uneasily that night, most of us huddled in groups, and some of us suspecting other students. The next morning, the cameras were back up, and any student who had smashed a camera was gone, missing. They never came back.

After that, we all played along. We did our jobs, followed the rules, and stayed away from trouble, the blinking cameras silent witnesses to our every move. Sometimes, someone would go what we called Mad Hatter. They'd snap and smash a camera or steal supplies. They'd be gone the next morning like clockwork, their belongings exactly as they'd left them. But they were successful in a way none of us were. They got out of this hell.

My backpack strap digs into my shoulder, bulging with my notebooks and history texts, as I climb the stairs to the first floor. Then, I open the doors to the lobby and set up camp, pulling out old notebooks. I look up and nearly jump. Only habit keeps my face expressionless.

A man dressed in a grey suit stands just outside the door. His skin is pale and his grey hair is slicked back. His eyes are hidden behind dark sunglasses. I call him Silver. And just as before, there are six men behind Silver, dressed in black suits and dark sunglasses.

"Casey, have you been sleeping well?" Silver asks, concerned, "You look tired, sweetheart."

My grip on my pencil tightens, and my hand itches to grab my knife. But I force myself to write his words on paper, and I don't answer him like I did before. The first time I met Silver, Old World Casey was still alive. It had been three days since the Old World died, and I was desperate. So when a strange man with a stranger entourage began making promises to me, telling me he was going to get me out, save me, I broke down and begged him to help. It was only later I realized he knew things he shouldn't. Things I hadn't told him, like my name, my dreams, my favorite ice cream flavor. And it wasn't just me he knew things about. I'd told the others, and they'd come to see Silver. They were creeped out by him and stayed away. I didn't. George Washington didn't win the Revolutionary War by force, he won through spies and information, something we desperately lack.

The door opens behind me, and I startle.

"Jason!" Silver exclaims. "It's been forever!"  
"Shut the hell up," Jason snarls.

The door shuts and a tall, lanky boy emerges. His hair is black, his eyes a deep brown, and he looks sixteen. I recognize this boy as another scientist, and also, Old World Casey's crush. She used to imagine their first date in Algebra 2, watching while Old World Jason fell asleep in class.

But like me, Jason has changed. His eyes are no longer dreamy. Instead, they are sharp and focused like the hard planes of his face. Jason sits down next to me, and my stomach remains unaffected, the old butterflies dormant. Old World Casey is truly dead. Jason pulls out his notebook and begins to take notes as I have, and for the first time in a long time, I have a partner. Silver does not talk anymore. He just stands there, watching us with an understanding expression on his face. He does that a lot, like he thinks we'll trust him.

Jason and I ignore him, our pencils scratching against our paper as the shadows grow long, our elbows occasionally bumping each other; Jason is left-handed. Then, five minutes before the sun sets, Silver and his cronies leave silently. So silently, that I nearly miss them go. Involuntarily, I shiver. If the devil had a human form, I'd imagine him as Silver.

I glance over at Jason, wondering why he is here. He seems nervous. His gaze keeps flicking to his journal, to the glass door, and back again. Jason fiddles with his pencil and turns to me. He opens his mouth as if to say something, and then closes it. Though I am curious, I focus on my notes. I cannot have incomplete data, and this is not the first time Jason has been acting strangely. For the past two weeks, he has been on edge, arriving to meetings late and straying closer and closer to my observation post, like he is trying to work up the courage to do something.

Old World Casey would have fantasized Jason confessing his undying love for her, but I am no longer so naive. New World Jason does not have time for such frivolities, and neither do I. If New World Jason is worried about something, it is not a crush. More likely than not, he knows something the rest of us do not. I had the others confront him, but he dodged their questions. He knows I suspect him of withholding information, and he is on edge. Watcher, as I am known, has a reputation for finding answers, and others will do what I tell them because they are afraid of me. My unspoken threat hangs heavy in the air between us as I wait him out.

"Are you staying for the horde, Watcher?" Jason finally asks.



I nod, switching out my journals. Jason leaves without another word, and I am not surprised. For months, I have been the only one to observe Silver and the horde. By coming here, he has only confirmed he knows something I do not. If Jason does not tell me what he knows, I'll have to confront him personally.

In another world, I respected people's privacy. I did not pry, I did not watch them, and I did not catalogue their actions. But I have too much at stake. I need to see my family again, tell them I'm sorry for all the things I said. I cannot die here. So I keep an eye on everyone, their schedules, their hobbies, and their jobs. There are too many people for me to keep track of daily, but I know enough about them from my notes that I can spot unrest before it begins. Usually, I am even able to tell who will go Mad Hatter next. Their eyes always go blank, emotionless. I'd call it bored, but there isn't even boredom in their eyes. They're just...empty.

I used to try and stop them, save them, but they had gone mad. They did not stop and they did not listen. No matter what I said or did, they always snapped. Now, I wait for it to happen and analyze what they did and why. I try to see if there is a pattern, if the Mad Hatters mean something. So far I have not deduced much, but I cannot stop my research. It must mean something, there must be a reason why we are going insane, a product implanted in our set community.

The others say it is depression, that the Mad Hatters have given up hope. But I cannot believe them, because I'm beginning to see the same dead look in everyone's eyes. If something does not change soon, we will all be Mad Hatters, a community collapsed from hopelessness. I can't allow that to happen. But even so, my research has yielded few results. I know it is only a matter of time before my eyes go dead, their spark extinguished. I don't want to die over a few smashed cameras. If I am going to meet Death in this hell, I want it to be amid the flames I have set. I want to go out as an explosion, tearing down this twisted society with me.

So I sit and wait for the horde, my notebook open and my pencil ready. But even after all these months of sleepless nights, I still have to force myself to stay and wait. I am the only one to observe, and I must carry on my experiments. The information I gain is valuable, and the other scientists and researchers depend on my data.

My shaking hand closes around the gold cross at my neck. It is bent and smells like quarters, but I can't bring myself to let go. Old World Casey went to church every Christmas and prayed for an A in Chemistry. I am no longer sure if God exists. The monsters are here, and I am abandoned. If there is a god, he has failed me.

I am still clutching the cross as night falls, and the first howls of the horde echo into the night. I hear their claws gouging pavement, their huge paws striking the road, cracking it. I imagine Death astride her horse, leading a horde of nightmares with her terrible smile.

Something slams against the glass doors of the lobby, rattling the frame. I jump; they are here. They look like dogs, if dogs were the size of small horses with foaming mouths and three rows of teeth. Others are afraid of the horde because they know we don't stand a chance against them. The horde is the sole reason why we stick to the instructions. They are afraid if we break out, the horde will kill us like they are rumored to have killed our families.

I agree with them, but I don't want to die here. So I force myself to drop the cross and begin the experiment. Slowly, I walk from one side of the room to the other, and the horde follows, slamming against the glass next to me, rattling the building, rattling my bones. I am not afraid of the horde's physical strength. But I am terrified of their intelligence. It gleams in their red eyes, a predatory sense that seems to know more than I do. They follow me back and forth across the room, throwing themselves at the glass over and over again, baying at the scent of my coppery blood. Not for the first time, I wonder how the glass holds.

Eventually, I sit down and take out my notes, struggling to keep my shaking hand steady. Something clicks behind me and I whirl around. At first, I see nothing, just the long hallways dark except for the red, blinking lights of the cameras and a lump on the door handle. Then I realize that the lump is a hand. There is a figure clothed entirely in black standing in the door way. I freeze and look up until I see his eyes. They are almost black in the darkness, but Old World Casey has dreamed about those eyes too often for me to forget them.

"Jason?" I whisper and the figure nods.

Silently, he slips inside the room and stands in the corner. It dawns on me then: Jason is waiting for the horde to notice him. He is testing their eyesight. For several long, painful moments, the horde continues to throw themselves toward me, ignoring Jason on the opposite side of the room. It's only when he begins walking across the windows that the horde throws themselves at him. My pencil scratches furiously against paper as I scribble down my theories and observations, recording everything.

Eventually, the sun rises, the horde leaves, and I pretend I am not still shaking. Jason pulls the ski mask off his face and meets my gaze.

"Why?" I ask. "Why now?"

Jason glances over my shoulder, and I turn to see a camera, watching us. Jason pulls me closer to him, his grip on my arm tight.

"I know something, Casey," he whispers.

Casey. No one has called me Casey since the beginning days of the New World, since I first started observing the demons that haunt us. The name sounds like a half-forgotten lullaby to my ears, a memento from my childhood. I thought everyone had forgotten it.

Jason's dark eyes bring me back to the present. They are desperate, and they flicker across my face like he is searching for something. The boy I used to love has unraveled a mystery and is trying to determine if I have done the same.

"Not here," I whisper, gesturing to the camera. "Meet me behind the bleachers."

Jason nods and takes off. I watch his lanky form receding in the distance, and I hurry to gather my things. The hallways are silent and dark. The others are still sleeping. It takes me three minutes to reach the gym, and I head to the bleachers without hesitation. But when I duck behind them, I don't see Jason. I glance around and trip over something soft. I catch myself and nearly scream at what I see.

Jason is lying on the floor at my feet, facedown.

"J-jason?" I ask, fear like icy knives against my skin. He doesn't answer.

Dreading what I might find, I bend down and hesitantly tap him. He doesn't respond. Adrenaline seeps into my bloodstream, a crimson poison. I shake as I turn Jason over, and my hand flies to my mouth. I feel like someone has crushed my lungs, and I drop to my knees, quivering.

Jason's dark eyes stare up at me, unseeing. There are no marks or bruises on him. He is just pale with a single trickle of blood drying at the corner of his mouth. He is still warm. Acid bile rises in my throat, and I lurch away, heaving. I am going to throw up. I want to throw up, erase the image of Jason's dead eyes staring at me. I heave, but nothing comes up.



I need to get out of here, escape while I still can. But I need to examine Jason's body, see what killed him. The murderer probably left in a hurry when he saw me. If I am quick, I might even catch a glimpse of him. But what I need to do and what I can do are two very different things. I can't bring myself to touch Jason again, and I can't force myself to my feet. Instead, I tremble on the ground, icy terror washing through my veins while a tiny part of my brain is obsessing over how long it will take to erase Jason's death-gaze from my nightmares.

I let the tears come, finally allowing Old World Casey to grieve. Now that Jason is dead, she will crack and shatter to pieces, and not even New World Casey will survive. All that will be left of me is Watcher.

Slowly, I crawl forward until I am by Jason's side. I reach behind my neck and pull at my cross necklace. My fingers fumble with the clasp, and I break the chain. The cross falls from my neck, and I drop it over Jason's heart. I am burying a part of me with him.

I sit back and reach for Jason's bag though I already know what I will find. The bag is empty, Jason's notebooks and texts gone. The killer had a purpose. I need to get out of here, now. Shaking, I rest a hand against the gym wall, willing my trembling legs to move. Something that sounds like muffled laughter echoes through the gym, a soft, mirthless lullaby.

Slowly, I look up, and my heart freezes in my chest, terror crystallizing in my veins. Silver is behind the bleachers with me, standing in the shadows, smiling at me. But his smile is no longer understanding or concerned. Instead, it twists on his face like a viper, white and ruthless. Slowly, he reaches up and removes the dark sunglasses, smiling like he is showing me something I should already know. The hair on the back of my neck stands up when I see Silver's eyes. They don't have whites or even pupils. Instead, they glow red, flashing slowly, mechanically, just like the camera lights. Something howls in the distance, and I hear claws crushing pavement outside, drawing closer.

My breath comes in ragged gasps, each one like a knife to the chest. And I know. I know like I know the paralyzing terror of fear, which now comes to me unbidden. Stumbling back, I take one last glance at my friend's cold, dead eyes. Devoid of life and emotion, empty. Glancing up at Silver's menacing red eyes, I know with every fiber of my being I have failed.

Jason is dead, and I am next.

## Acknowledgements

Allison Byruch

Dr. Linda Maisel

Doug McCambridge

Maria Smith



## Staff

**Editor:** Veronica Nagorny

**Managing Editor:** Leslee Blahut

**Co-Layout Editors:** Katie DeAngelo  
Kali Vaporakis

**Social Media Coordinator:** Zoey Houser

**Events Chair:** Julia Lehman

**Publication Assistants:** Tiara Dwight  
Hannah Hessler  
Natalia Zecca-Naples

**Publication Advisor:** Dr. Wilbert Turner, Jr.

## Colophon

27" iMac

Adobe InDesign CC 13.0.1, 2018.

Printed and Perfect-Bound by Thomson Shore, Inc.  
Dexter, MI.

500 copies, 72 pages.

Cover: 12 pt C1S Gloss Layflat Lamination

Black & White and Color pages:

100# White Text Matte

Fonts: DJB About a Boy, Highway Gothic, Highway Gothic Condensed,  
Impact, Minion Pro, Wingdings

Editors evaluate submissions for each category through a blind review process. Many illegal U-turns were made during the making of this publication.



## INDEX

Name	Title	Page
<b>POETRY</b>		
Kiara Lynn Garcia	Underneath the Soles	8
Natalia Zecca-Naples	Where Are You Going?	9
Natalia Zecca-Naples	The Answer in Your Eyes	10
Jordan Burbage	Awake	11
Leslee Blahut	I Am From	11
Tiara Dwight	Fresh Meat	12
Omayra Acuirre	To Be Continued	13
<b>PROSE</b>		
Emma Conard	Hike of Life	14
Veronica Nagorny	Used to Think	15
Natalia Zecca-Naples	Where Do We Go From Here?	21
<b>PHOTOGRAPHY/ARTWORK</b>		
Leslee Blahut	It Was Taken Out There	27
Linda Fanning Lefevre	Untitled	28
Sara Rountree	Delta Dusk	29
Julia Lehman	Into the Distance	29
Emily Kennedy	The Jungle	30
Lizmary Ortiz	Anywhere St.	31
Sara Rountree	Hope in Focus	31
Emily Kennedy	Post Rain	32
Emily Kennedy	Close Call	33
Sara Rountree	Cascade	34
Tiara Dwight	Autumn Solace	34
Sara Rountree	Nightlight	35
Katie DeAngelo	Past and Present	36
Katie DeAngelo	The Other Side	37
Julia Lehman	Goodbye, Manhattan	38
Amber Degregorio	Looking Back	38
Emily Kennedy	Ooooo Aaaah Ooooo	39
Kiara Lynn Garcia	Micula Bridge in Tacna, Peru	40
Sara Rountree	The Red Door	40
Linda Fanning Lefevre	Ginza	41
Veronica Feibusch	Path Through Winter	42
<b>PLAY</b>		
Natalia Zecca-Naples	Minutes Till Midnight	44
<b>HIGH SCHOOL POETRY</b>		
Emma Cameron	History's Last Request	55
Paige Reali	Reality	56
Raven Steiner	Where Am I Going? Where Have I Been?	58
Alesandra Temerte	The Edge of the World	59
<b>HIGH SCHOOL PROSE</b>		
Alesandra Temerte	My Story	61
Paige Reali	Lucid Nightmares	62

# Stay Connected

With *The Gleaner*



[DelVal.edu/the-gleaner](http://DelVal.edu/the-gleaner)



[/DelValGleaner](https://www.instagram.com/DelValGleaner)



[Delvalgleaner@gmail.com](mailto:Delvalgleaner@gmail.com)



The Gleaner at Delaware Valley University



[@DelValGleaner](https://twitter.com/DelValGleaner)





